CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system enabling a character-based, graphically expressive messaging service for mobile, wireless devices, comprising:

a character file database storing, for at least one character, a set of image files corresponding to a plurality of moods for each character;

a messaging server operative to present a user interface facilitating the composition of a character-based, graphically expressive message;

the user interface allowing the user to select a character and a mood for the message;

the user interface allowing the user to input text and identify a message recipient;

wherein the messaging server is operative to transmit to the message recipient a message including an image of the selected character in the selected mood and the text inputted by the user.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the user interface allows the user to select a character from a list of selectable characters.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the user interface allows the user to select a mood from a list of selectable moods.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the user interface includes a set of selectable pre-defined text messages.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein the user interface includes a set of selectable message recipients.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein each image file represents an animated sequence of images.

7. The system of claim 1 further comprising a user account database storing user account data and preferences for individual users.

8. The system of claim 7 wherein the user account database includes a list of favorite characters for each user account; and wherein the user interface allows the user to select a character from the list of favorite characters.

9. The system of claim 1 further comprising an address book database storing lists of message recipients in association with individual user accounts; and wherein the user interface allows the user to select a message recipient from the list of message recipients associated with the user account corresponding to the user.

10. The system of claim 1 further comprising a message database storing messages created by users using the user interface; wherein the message server is operative to store message data in pre-defined message data fields in the message database.

11. The system of claim 10 wherein the message data fields for each message include a character identifier and a mood identifier; and wherein the message server is operative to construct a character-based graphically expressive message based on the character identifier and mood identifier values associated with a message.

12. The system of claim 2 further comprising a user account database storing, for a given user account, at least one recipient user group in association with a list of selectable characters; and wherein the messaging server is operative to associate a message recipient with a recipient user group and adapt the user interface to present the list of characters associated with the corresponding recipient user group.

13. The system of claim 12 wherein the user account database further stores, for a given user account, at least one recipient user group in association with a list of selectable moods; and wherein the messaging server is operative to associate a

message recipient with a recipient user group and adapt the user interface to present the list of moods associated with the corresponding recipient user group.

14. The system of claim 2 wherein the messaging server is operative to record usage data characterizing use of the messaging server in association with individual user accounts, and wherein the list of selectable characters is ordered, for a given user, based on the usage data associated with the corresponding user account.

15. The system of claim 3 wherein the messaging server is operative to record usage data characterizing use of the messaging server in association with individual user accounts, and wherein the list of selectable moods is ordered, for a given user, based on the usage data associated with the corresponding user account.

16. The system of claim 1 further comprising a character creation module allowing a user to create a character from a plurality of pre-existing character elements, store the character in the character file database to allow for subsequent selection of the character using the user interface.

17. The system of claim 1 further comprising a character upload module allowing a user to upload a character image file in the character file database in association with a character identifier and a mood identifier to allow for subsequent selection of the character file using the user interface.

18. The system of claim 17 wherein the character image file is a digital photo image.

19. A system enabling a character-based, graphically expressive messaging service for mobile, wireless devices, comprising:

a character file database storing, for at least one character, a set of image files corresponding to a plurality of moods for each character;

a content database storing user interface data allowing a client device to display a user interface facilitating the composition of a character-based, graphically

expressive message; the user interface data allowing for selection of a character and a mood for the message; the user interface data allowing the user to input text and identify a message recipient; and

a messaging server operative to:

receive a request from a client device associated with a user;

retrieve user interface data in the content database and transmit the user interface data to the client device associated with the user;

receive a request to transmit a message composed by the user using the client device; and

transmit to the message recipient a message including an image of the selected character in the selected mood and the text inputted by the user.

20. The system of claim 19 wherein the user interface data allows the user to select a character from a list of selectable characters.

21. The system of claim 19 wherein the user interface data allows the user to select a mood from a list of selectable moods.

22. The system of claim 19 wherein the user interface data includes a set of selectable pre-defined text messages.

23. A system enabling a character-based, graphically expressive messaging service for mobile, wireless devices, comprising:

a character file database storing at least one character identifier and a plurality of mood identifiers associated with each character identifier;

a character file space storing a set of image files for each mood identifier associated with each character identifier in the character file database, each file in the set of image files associated with a device type;

a message database storing messages created by users; and

a messaging server operably connected to a telecommunications network to receive data from and transmit data to devices operably connected to the network;

wherein the messaging server is operative to present a user interface facilitating the composition of a character-based, graphically expressive message;

the user interface allowing the user to select a character and a mood for the character;

the user interface allowing the user to input text and identify a message recipient;

wherein the message server is operative to store message data in pre-defined message data fields in the message database;

wherein the message server is operative to:

receive a request from a recipient user using a device connected to the network;

identify a device type corresponding to the device;

extract from the message database message data associated with a message sent to the recipient user;

construct a message based on the message data in the message database, and the image file corresponding to the character identifier and mood identifier contained in the message data and the identified device type; and,

transmit the message to the device associated with the recipient user.

24. The system of claim 23 further comprising a content database storing message application content and interfaces for a plurality of device types; and wherein the message server is operative to identify the device type corresponding to a device associated with a user and direct requests from the device to application content and interfaces specific to the identified device type.

25. The system of claim 23 wherein the user interface allows the user to select a character from a list of selectable characters.

26. The system of claim 23 wherein the user interface allows the user to select a mood from a list of selectable moods.

27. The system of claim 23 wherein the user interface includes a set of selectable pre-defined text messages.

28. The system of claim 23 wherein the user interface includes a set of selectable message recipients.

29. The system of claim 23 wherein each image file represents an animated sequence of images.

30. The system of claim 23 further comprising a user account database storing user account data and preferences for individual users.

31. The system of claim 30 wherein the user account database includes a list of favorite characters for each user account; and wherein the user interface allows the user to select a character from the list of favorite characters.

32. The system of claim 23 further comprising an address book database storing lists of message recipients in association with individual user accounts; and wherein the user interface allows the user to select a message recipient from the list of message recipients associated with the user account corresponding to the user.

33. A method enabling a character-based, graphically expressive messaging service for mobile, wireless devices, the method comprising:

creating a character file database storing at least one character identifier and a plurality of mood identifiers associated with each character identifier;

creating a character file space storing a set of image files for each mood identifier associated with each character identifier in the character file database, each file in the set of image files associated with a device type;

receiving from a first device a request to send a message to a recipient user, the request including a character identifier, a mood identifier and message text;

storing the character identifier, the mood identifier and the message text in a message database;

receiving a request from a second device associated with the recipient user;

identifying the device type corresponding to the second device;

retrieving the message data associated with the message in the message database;

retrieving the character image file from the character file space corresponding to the character identifier, the mood identifier, and the identified device type;

constructing the message including the character image file and the message text; and

transmitting the constructed message to the second device.